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SUBJECT: US/EU POLICY PLANNING TALKS

Classified By: USEU/POL: Harry O'Hara, reasons 1.4 b/d

11. (C) Summary: US and EU policy planners met September 20 to discuss the transatlantic relationship, the Middle East Peace Process (MEPP), Iraq, Iran, and the Broader Middle East and North Africa and the EU's Barcelona Process. Discussions were frank about the challenges in the main message from discussions on Iraq was that European nerves were still raw: time and again EU representatives dwelled more on what had happened over Iraq, then on what should happen to help stabilize Iraq. When pressed by Reiss, a broad range of EU diplomats, think tankers and journalists admitted that their publics do not see Iraq as critical to their security (and, by extension, this sentiment will continue to limit what the EU collectively and its members individually can offer the Iraqi Interim Government). In contrast, Europeans placed greater emphasis on the MEPP and the Quartet. EU officials) facing a dead-end of the EU-3 diplomacy over Iran -- demonstrated little appetite for tougher measures, and hoped that somehow the US could rescue the day by launching a grand bargain with the Iranian government. End Summary.

12. (U) S/P Director Dr. Mitchell B. Reiss and S/P Principal Deputy Director Barry Lowenkron met September 20-23 with a broad range of European Council and Commission officials, 25 member state Political and Security Ambassadors, as well as NGOs, European Parliament members, academics and journalists to take the temperature of the transatlantic relationship and to explore ways to revitalize the relationship. Key EU officials that Reiss and Lowenkron met with include EU Council Policy Unit Head Christoph Heusgen; Council Director Jim Cloos; the 25 EU Ambassadors assigned to the EU Political and Security Committee; Solana Personal WMD Representative Annalisa Giannella; and also from the Council policy unit: Gyorgy Tatt, Rein Tamsaar, Andreas Papaconstantinou, Bjorn Larsson, Antonio Alvarez Barthe and Petr Hladik.

The transatlantic relationship: a warm-up round

13. (C) EU and US participants reviewed key findings of the recent German Marshall Fund (GMF) report on transatlantic relations. Discussed were the common transatlantic public recognition of the need for the US and Europe to work together, US/European support for the UN, US public support for a stronger EU, and differences over the use of force. Reiss stressed that the results could boost efforts to renew the relationship: both sides of the Atlantic wanted close cooperation, and the American public supported a strong EU. The key was how both sides could build on the findings to tackle key problems, above all the Middle East agenda: Iraq, Iran, BMENA, and the MEPP.

EU not opposed to the use of force

14. (C) Cloos said that Iraq posed many questions for the EU including under what circumstances could force legitimately be used. He warned against drawing a conclusion that just because the EU disapproved the use of force in Iraq, that therefore, Europe opposes the use of force per se. He said that Kosovo, Sierra Leone and Afghanistan showed that Europe could accept the use of force; furthermore, Kosovo showed that Europe could support the use of military force without UN blessing. Heusgen added that now Russia is seeking to justify its right to take unilateral action against terrorists anywhere on the basis of the rationale used by the US to justify its use of force in Iraq. He also claimed that the Sudanese government has borrowed the US concept of "illegal combatants," as developed and applied to Guantanamo, to justify some of its current actions.

Afghanistan

15. (C) Reiss noted that Afghanistan was one area everyone is touting as a model of multilateral cooperation. That being the case, he asked what more the EU could do there. Setting aside what some member states and NATO are doing, Cloos replied that the EU is working on developing capabilities to support its missions abroad, including in Afghanistan, and will get there eventually. He admitted that there is a gap between EU will and EU capabilities and that the EU can't do all that it would like to do. Heusgen noted that European publics understand that Afghanistan is a security problem

both for being a source of drugs and base for various terrorist camps.

Iraq

16. (C) Reiss asked the central question as whether both sides could cooperate on Iraq today. He asked if European publics see what is happening in Iraq as important to their security and their futures and, if so, what are they prepared to do about it. Heusgen noted strong European public feelings that Iraq is not an European mess, that the US-led coalition had made this mess, and that Iraq and Afghanistan were different.

Lowenkron noted that the US had been working to internationalize the post-war effort, represented by two UN Security Council resolutions. It was perfectly reasonable to ask the EU) especially given its strong support for the UN -- to help in any way, including offering protection to the UN officials working to prepare the January elections. Cloos responded that US actions in the UN were &too late.8 He argued that had the US approached the UN right after the end of hostilities with the ideas it has presented since, then the mood in Europe might have been different. Cloos suggested that more "fundamental" to him than these recent US internationalization efforts was a US concept that the "mission defines the coalition." He said that this concept undermines 40 years of transatlantic relations - not just with the EU but also with NATO. We need to work together as a coalition to define the mission, he said. On Iraq, Cloos said that Europe found a way to say "no" to the US. Heusgen added that he was pessimistic that the EU, particularly France and Germany, will want to do anything new on Iraq -- not just before, but even after, November 2.

The "war" on terrorism

17. (C) Heusgen suggested that the US reconsider its effort to link Iraq to the war on terrorism, as this linkage does not work among European publics. He suggested that European audiences would more sympathetic to language on the plight of "failed," "fragile" or "failing" states. On Iraq, the US would have a better chance if it depicted the challenge as reconstructing a failed state or preventing a failed state. Heusgen emphasized that the very notion of a "war" on terrorism does not sound good in Europe, Madrid notwithstanding. Cloos rejected an idea that Europe somehow needs another terrorist attack to become sympathetic to the US views on terrorism. Europe fears terrorism but doesn't see this as a war. Lowenkron suggested that in the fight/war on terrorism, the difference seems to be that Europe is concerned about it while the US is committed to fight it.

EU as "partner" or "leader"

18. (C) Heusgen said that the GMF study showed that US and European publics wanted the EU to be a leader. He doubted, however, that the US is ready to accept the EU -- with all its weaknesses -- as a partner. On the MEPP, he argued that the EU needs to believe that the US is willing to share leadership with the EU -- something that currently is not the case. On Iraq, the current situation is so "out-of-hand" that he has trouble seeing how individual member states might want to move in at all. At an EU-wide level, there is no support for doing more in Iraq, he said. Perhaps if European public understood that there would an end-point or departure state, that would help but he wondered if anyone realistically could see an end-point in Iraq. Reiss replied that the challenge is to stabilize the situation in the cities so our troops can leave them and no longer be a lightning rod. Police can do a better job and we currently are in a race between the insurgents and the government until January 2005 elections. Heusgen said that regardless, European public opinion remained "very difficult" on Iraq.

Problems with US leadership: Style or Issues?

19. (C) Heusgen said that the European don't oppose US leadership per se, just the current style of leadership. Cloos demurred and questioned whether focusing on style leads to a constructive debate. He said that one way to turn around negative European perceptions is to "get rid" of Guantanamo, an issue that undercuts the US claim to offer "moral leadership." The recent controversy of various USG memos on the use of torture had revealed an America that Europeans did not know. He blamed these memos for contributing to growing cynicism on international human rights. He added that the prison incidents in Abu Ghraib had done "horrible damage" to the US. For a number of reasons, including embarrassment, many in the EU didn't even want to talk about or raise Abu Ghraib with the US. Cloos suggested that differences over issues, not style, were at the heart of the current condition of the relationship. Beside Guantanamo, Iraq and Abu Ghraib, the EU was still upset about the

International Criminal Court and Kyoto. Reiss explained the domestic history of these two issues -- including the role and attitude of the Congress -- and added that not a single major European country is meeting its Kyoto targets. Reiss asked if the damage was so great that the US has lost a generation in Europe. Cloos answered with "no-but" while Heusgen said the transatlantic relation was in a "deep hole."

MEPP

10. (C) Cloos said that the MEPP is central, not just for the EU, but also for the transatlantic relationship. He said that the US has a number of fundamental misconceptions) including its belief that the EU is somehow biased against Israel. He argued that the EU does try to engage Israel positively and does condemn Palestinian terrorism. He said that even though many depict the EU and the US as having huge difference on the MEPP and the roadmap, this is false. The one big difference is that the EU believes that Arafat, as bad as he is, can't be ignored. Cloos also expressed frustration that Israel is able to bypass the Quartet and make direct deals with the US on Roadmap issues that should be dealt with in the Quartet.

BMENA

11. (C) Reiss briefed EU officials on the state of play on BMENA, reinforcing the President's message that the G-8 Sea island initiative is multi-decade, multilateral, diplomatic in focus and not designed to substitute for the MEPP -- all things that the European have told us they want. Reiss said that the US is interested in working with Europe and is disappointed with the EU's lack of enthusiasm. Heusgen said that the EU agreed on the objectives of BMENA and is already spending one billion euros/year on its own Barcelona Process. The Barcelona Process, 10 years old and an object of pride for Solana when it was created when he was the Spanish Foreign Minister, is in need of revitalization, he admitted. Heusgen said that it was good that the US, through BMENA, sought engagement in the region -- though EU had had some concerns that US had been interested in imposing it on the region. Lowenkron reminded Cloos that the leaked document that touched off the original criticism in the Arab World had been a G-8 document) and that none of the language that had been shared among the G-8 members claimed that the West was intent on imposing change in the region. Cloos asked if we could find a work-around regarding EU's fears that BMENA would be used to distract from the MEPP.

Possible BMENA/Barcelona Process Cooperation

12. (C) Heusgen suggested that with all this behind us, perhaps we could then explore some concrete areas of cooperation in education, private investment and local administration. The EU is working on action plans, which would contain a broad range of regional assistance packages, for internal EU discussion next month. There had been some internal EU hesitation about moving ahead with these action plans but these have been overcome. Perhaps the US and the EU, or EC, might explore how their projects might be fitted together; for example, in education, where the EU tends to emphasize higher education while US assistance is focused on secondary and elementary education. Reiss and Heusgen agreed that Egypt is a key country. Reiss noted that promoting democracy there would be complex and various structures needed to be in place beforehand and that a premature push for elections could create instability.

Political teeth for the Barcelona Process?

13. (C) Heusgen noted that the Barcelona Process had been helpful in Tunisia on the business side but had not worked well in promoting human rights. From a policy planning perspective, Heusgen said that it was not great for the EU to providing economic support that also strengthens an undemocratic government. Reiss suggested that we could draw from the old Helsinki Process Basket III approach of reviewing and monitoring progress on human rights. Hladik noted that precisely the Helsinki model frightens some Arabian countries. Lowenkron stressed that it is important that, whatever the EU or the US does, these efforts do not degenerate into economics-only assistance. Heusgen suggested that the EU might use the forthcoming 10th anniversary of the Barcelona Process to make it better and also to make it more visible to the people that it is helping.

14. (C) EU policy unit member Vassalo noted that the BMENA project is developing in a positive direction and said that there is wider acceptance of it in the region. Nonetheless, Heusgen said that the EU will stick to the Barcelona Process. USEU Min-Couns Scott noted that in many countries, where the US and the EU wanted to help, we had only a limited universe

of participants/partners to work with. Perhaps US and EU reps in the field could consider closer coordination under these circumstances. Already we are doing this in a number of Gulf States, he noted.

Iran: fork in the road

15. (C) Heusgen noted that while the EU-3 process had made some progress in the last year, the Iranians have not stopped enrichment. We can expect to enter into a difficult time between now and the November IAEA Board of Governors Meeting.

EU policy planner Bjorn Larsson said that Iran will decide whether we go to a good or a bad scenario. He asked if some kind of grand deal is possible among the EU, the US, Russia and Iran to put it on the good road. Reiss replied that Iran already is in non-compliance on its safeguard agreement and that we should act on that first. In addition, Reiss noted that he had seen nothing from the Iranians indicating interest in working with the US on a grand deal. He said if the EU-3 argues against toughness on Iran, then we will have a highly divisive issue in the transatlantic relationship. As policy makers, he asked if there is a way that we can imagine a combination of joint US/EU carrots and sticks to get the Iranians to do the right thing. But this would not be US sticks and EU carrots, rather the EU would have to show sticks and be tough on Iran. Reiss cautioned that some in the US see the current situation as one of now that the EU-3 has "failed" in Iran, they are now in a "cul-du-sac;" and therefore the EU should now ask the US to step in and fix it. Heusgen noted that he sees some possibility that the US and the EU could cooperate on Iran, after November 2.

Cloos on Iraq: Round II

16. (C) Key Solana advisor on transatlantic affairs, Jim Cloos, was even blunter in his September 21 conversation than he had been the previous day. He said that the EU is not willing to play in Iraq. While he agreed that could be a window of opportunity to discuss this after November 2 -- regardless of who wins -- he questioned what help the EU could provide that would make a difference to the situation in Iraq. Reiss asked if European publics and leaders would resonate with an appeal for help to Iraq based US help to Europe in WWII -- something that could be explored in various ceremonies from WWII that would take place this year. Cloos said that using these models would be "over the top." If the US wants to work on Iraq with the EU, we would need to start some private talks with Solana but currently, Cloos said, the EU is not prepared to deal with us on Iraq in a serious fashion. Cloos also said that "nice words" from the US would not be enough to get a serious commitment from the EU on Iran. The MEPP would be a different matter -- this is for the EU and for Solana, the number one foreign policy problem for the EU and an area where US leadership is essential and desirable.

Cloos on MEPP: Round II

17. (C) Cloos said that "emotions in the EU on the Quartet are boiling" with him and others increasingly seeing this as something to keep the Europeans happy. He sees Israel as not respecting the Quartet and the US tacitly permitting this. Cloos said that despite this, no one in the EU opposes US leadership in the MEPP.

What the EU can do for the US?

18. (C) When asked by Reiss what the EU offers the US if we would work together more in foreign policy, Cloos listed greater legitimacy in the international arena for our actions, political links that the US does not have, some independent EU capabilities from its nascent battle groups to election observers, financial assistance to key countries through the Barcelona Process, and trade and cooperation agreements -- a powerful carrot for countries like Iran.

PSC Ambassadors lunch

19. (C) Director Reiss addressed the ambassadors of the EU Political and Security Committee (PSC) over lunch, focusing on the critical challenges facing the US and EU in the greater Middle East: Iraq, Iran, BMENA, and the MEPP. Most of the discussion following Reiss's presentation covered the MEPP with Reiss fielding questions about settlements, Gaza, Israel, and US views on a nuclear free zone in the mid-east (as a way to get a handle on Iran's nuclear program). While most participants preferred to talk about the MEPP and the failure of the US and the EU to work well together there, the Dutch PSC Ambassador tried to shift the discussion to Iraq. In the short discussion on Iraq, Ambassador Hamer, the Dutch Presidency Ambassador who chaired the lunch for the EU, said that the EU was not disengaged from Iraq and that the EU supported the Iraqi President, that discussions on debt

relief were "ongoing", that the EU is considering election support and support for UN and other protection forces.

Other topics

120. (C) On China, one PSC Ambassador said that the current EU arms embargo was only about Tianmanen and not the current human rights situation in China. The French Ambassador highlighted the EU Code of Conduct, while arguing that it was unnatural for the EU to lump China in with a handful of states where the EU still retained sanctions. Another PSC Ambassador suggested that US/EU differences over China arms will lead to another transatlantic disagreement. On terrorism, a number of PSC Ambassadors said that the US is too focused on military responses. On a more positive note, one PSC Ambassador praised US/EU cooperation in the Balkans as good for the Balkans and good for transatlantic relations.

NGO/think tank/journalist discussion

121. (SBU) Reiss met with a broad range of journalists, think tankers, EU officials, European Parliamentarians at two off-the-record conversations, one sponsored by the German Marshal Fund on September 20 and the second by the Bertelsman Foundation on September 21. Participants echoed many of the comments and concerns expressed in the policy planning talks. However, the tone was often sharper.

Iraq

122. (SBU) Numerous Europeans described the damage done by Iraq to the US image in Europe as significant. Others admitted that the European reaction had a strong emotional content that made this difficult to repair. There was strong consensus that "things were far from normal" in the transatlantic relationship, despite recent efforts at Summits to "paper things over." Others wondered whether the European could "trust" what the US says in light of the lack of WMD in Iraq.

123. (SBU) There was widespread feeling that the Mid-East Peace Process is much more important than Iraq for Europeans. One participant argued that Iraq was not the cause of the current transatlantic crisis, rather Europe felt slighted by the lack of a US effort to work with Europe in the immediate aftermath to 9/11. Another participant wondered if US foreign policy was being driven by conflict between a &good side8 and a &bad side.8 The problem for the US, from a European perspective, is that the bad side is winning. This "bad side" wins when the US commits a fundamental breach of values through its use of torture and when US leaders allegedly do not accept the consequences of their actions. If the US continues in this way, there will be a major transatlantic break with foreign policy coordination occurring on a case-by-case basis and not on the basis on common beliefs or values.

Iran

124. (SBU) On Iran, a journalist suggested that if Europe is given the choice between an Iran with nukes or a decision to bomb Iran, Europe will choose an Iran with nukes. If the US does bomb Iran, this will be the nail in the coffin of the transatlantic relationship. Another journalist said that Iran should be seen less dramatically and as a test of US commitment to multilateralism -- especially when multilateralism is "hard."

US Response: questions are two-way

125. (SBU) Both Reiss and Lowenkron noted that a clear message coming through from many of their European interlocutors is that, despite the difficult state of transatlantic relations, Europeans expected the US to help them out whether it be the MEPP or Iran. What this misses is that US also has questions about the transatlantic relationship, Europe's commitment to helping Iraq, and fighting terrorism and nuclear proliferation. Lowenkron told the Bertelsman Foundation participants that a message to Washington comprising of "press the Israelis and don,t ask us for any help on Iraq8 was hardly fruitful for building a solid trans-atlantic relationship. Several participants took exception to the stark way the view was presented) but not to the view itself.

Comment

126. (C) At every event, Director Reiss and Dep. Dir. Lowenkron asked their European hosts to imagine a blank sheet onto which they were free to write down as many policy

recommendations as they would like as to what the U.S. should do in Iraq. Most left their pages blank. Two (Heusgen and Cloos) argued that the sheet should have one point: move out on the Israeli-Palestinian front. The failure of Europe to see that what happens in Iraq is important for European security, and not just the security of the United States, was sobering. If this is indeed the case, then the EU is in danger of missing an opportunity post-November 2 to try to fix the relationship. The bottom line message to Dir. Reiss was the EU seems willing to run the risk that it can & sit out8 Iraq (while demanding greater action on MEPP and US carrots on Iran) without further damaging the trans-atlantic relationship.

127. (U) S/P cleared this message.

128. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.

Schnabel